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Jesus and the Child as a Model of Spirituality

Robert N. Brown

A study of the biblical writings shows that the child is used widely as a model of spirituality but essentially in the father-child relationship. This is already in the OT understood as involving on the part of God the most tender feelings of affection, expressed in his gracious choice of Israel as his child, in his exercise of the fatherly and parental function of nurture and training, in his merciful forgiveness of sins, and in his especial care for the fatherless and the poor. We "should not try, as has sometimes been done, to dim the illuminative power of the OT tidings of the father by intensifying the splendour of its Christian counterpart". /1 Already, too, in the OT, the father-child relationship is seen as involving on the part of man attitudes of trust and dependence, obedience and gratitude to God, as well as mutual obligations to all God's people. Jesus richly developed this imagery, to speak both of his own experience of God and of the relationship to God to which he called men. His use of the term "Abba" is of especial significance, being a term "that contains all the nearness, affection and love in which we do not 'designate' a person as father but in which the child addresses its 'father'". /2 This term "Abba", as Jeremias states, "is an ipsissima vox of Jesus and contains in nuce his message and his claim to have been sent from the Father." /3 Jesus stressed here the nearness of God, appealing to man's experience of earthly fatherhood as a faint shadow of God's parental disposition, and developing the theme of the father's forgiveness of the sinner. His call to sonship reaffirms the need for total obedience to the will of God; his delineation of the character of God gave the disciples the confidence to put their complete trust in God, and to seek to reflect in their lives as children of God something of the same character. This background of teaching on the father-child relationship in the OT and in the message of Jesus, is the context in which the texts concerning Jesus and the children are best understood.

Here we are concerned with those texts in which Jesus is engaged with actual children, particularly the

accounts of the controversy on true greatness (Mark 9.33-37; cf. Matthew 18.1-5/Luke 9.46-48), and the blessing of the children (Mark 10.13-16; cf Matthew 19.13-15/Luke 18.15-17).

The controversy about greatness

(Mark 9.33-37; cf. Matthew 18.1-5 par)

The context of the pericope about greatness in Mark's Gospel is that of a passage designed to illustrate the blindness of the disciples to the messianic concept of Jesus and to emphasize the distinctive nature of the discipleship involved in obedience to such a Messiah. The contrast between traditional concepts and the outlook of Jesus is illustrated here in the controversy among the disciples over "greatness" and the reaction of Jesus. "This story", states C.F.D. Moule "is a measure of the disciples' failure to understand. They are still estimating 'greatness' by grandness. Jesus says 'real greatness means caring about people - not people who are regarded as 'important' but simply people, such as this child here.'" /4

The response of Jesus to the embarrassed silence of the disciples when questioned about their dispute is twofold.

The first is the aphorism in v35 that "if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." The general import of the teaching is clear and it is that greatness means not the right to be served most, but to serve most.

The second part of the response of Jesus to his disciples dispute about greatness consists of the action of taking a child, standing him in the midst of the disciples and identifying himself with the child by putting his arm around him, interpreting the meaning of this in the statement that "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." (v37). The line of thought seems to be that "Jesus having declared that true greatness is a matter of humble service (v35), goes on to give an example of such humble service, underlining its real greatness by the explanation that such service rendered to such a little child will be accepted as done to Jesus, and service done to Jesus will be accepted by God as rendered to God." /5

In this context the child is a symbol of the needy. Barclay states simply that "the child is typical of the

person who needs things". /6

As well as presenting the child as a symbol of the needy and in some way specially related to Jesus, Mark preserves for us "a tender affectionate aspect of Jesus' character which the Church especially cherished." /7

Matthew places the pericope about the controversy on greatness (Matthew 18.1-5) in the context of a collection of sayings of Jesus designed to show how disciples are to treat one another. Matthew freely edits at this point the material he has received from Mark, omitting the account of the dispute about greatness among the disciples to concentrate on the question of rank in the kingdom of heaven. Verses 3 and 4 are given here in this form by Matthew alone, though he has reached over to Mark 10.15 for verse 3. Matthew's version of this saying emphasizes the fact that the disciples must "turn and become like children (cf. Mark 10.15 where the disciples must "receive the kingdom of God like a child"). This saying is better suited to the question about greatness than is the saying about welcoming children (Mark 9/37/Matthew 18.5). Schweizer comments that "Matthew's purpose is undoubtedly to emphasize repentance in the sense of return to childlike thought, will and action." /8

Does Matthew mean to imply here a reference to repentance as "metanoia", as conversion? The Greek word used strephein has been taken by some scholars to imply this, though the linguistic evidence for such a translation is slight. /9 The question cannot be resolved on the limited usage of the term in the NT but must be considered in relation to the appropriateness of the NT conception of repentance to the text in question. Here we note that repentance in the Bible has two basic meanings. It can refer either to a turning to God or to a regretting of a wrong done. These two motifs are combined in the NT concept though the former predominates. "Jesus.....regarded sin in essence as alienation from God and the misery of the lack of trust in God's goodness and power. Therefore repentance was a putting away of doubt in God and the anxiety of lostness which follows from it; and a return to God in the confidence and joy of a trusting son." /10 In his teaching "the attitude of mind that most frequently militates against

repentance is self-righteousness and presumption", so that genuine repentance, the repentance that opens to itself the Kingdom of God, is only possible when a man knows he is small and slight as a child before God." /11 Such an understanding of repentance relates harmoniously to the general thought of the passage and therefore we cannot reject the possibility that in this instance strephein should be thought of as referring to repentance and conversion.

If Matthew stresses repentance in v3, the following verse makes it clear that the clue to this process is "humility". "Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (v4)

Humility in the NT is both a "personal virtue" and a "social virtue". As a personal virtue, it emphasizes both a sense of dependence upon God and a spirit of contrition in his presence. Humility and contrition are closely linked, as for example in Isaiah 57.15 where God comes "to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite." It means simply "the willingness to let God be God; that is, to acknowledge one's dependence upon his creative powers; to rejoice in gratitude for his blessings; to adopt the ways of the Lord's as one's own; to accept in contrition the judgment of God when one falls short; to trust his power and willingness to forgive and redeem." /12 As a social virtue it stresses that the model of relationships in the Christian community is a life of humble service to the needy, patterned on the self-emptying of Christ and on his distinctive style of life.

This understanding of humility supports the argument for the appropriateness of the concepts of repentance and conversion at v3. Matthew has made it clear that the child is a model for spirituality because to become like a child involves repentance and humility. The link between the personal and social aspects of humility outlined above makes particularly apposite the use of the child both as a model of humility and the service of whom is a mark of humility. Thus Matthew 18.5 repeats Mark 9.37a /13

The blessing of the children (Mark 10.13-16; cf Matthew 19.13-15/Luke 18.15-17)

The form of the pericope on the blessing of the children in Mark's Gospel is that of a "pronouncement story". In the immediate context (Mark 10.1-31) the pronouncement story on children is linked with a pronouncement story on divorce (v3-9) with related sayings (v10-12) and is followed by three stories about Jesus with the common theme of attitudes to earthly possessions and the renunciation of wealth (v17-31). The topical arrangement of material about the domestic issues of marriage, children and possessions is determined "by the Evangelist's interest in the Kingdom of God and in teaching about sacrifice and renunciation." /14

It has been suggested that Mark has "two transparently clear motives in recounting the narrative." On the one hand is "his desire to illustrate the attitude of Jesus to children", and so implicitly that which his followers ought to adopt concerning the religious life of the child. But he also wants to stress "the lesson that children have to teach adults in their approach to God." /15

We have already noted how the passage on the controversy about greatness (Mark 9.33-37) shows Jesus' love of children; and we can see here again an authentic memory of that same love. The paidia who are referred to here are probably young children up to about the age of seven. They are brought to Jesus; the term used need not imply that they were carried in arms, though it does not exclude this possibility. The purpose for which they are brought is to receive his blessing for their future life, but the disciples objected. We are not told on what grounds they objected but the indignant reaction of Jesus shows that an important matter of principle was at issue for him. It is of interest that in the Gospels this is the sole occasion where such "indignation" is ascribed to Jesus while Matthew and Luke omit the term. "The object of a man's indignation is always revealing", comments Taylor, and "here it is the disciples' rebuff to children." /16 In his impatient repudiation of the disciples' attitude Jesus declares that children are not to be prevented from coming to him but on the contrary are to be encouraged, "for to such belongs the kingdom of God." (v14) The term "such" here can mean either "these and other (literal) children" or "these and others who, though not literally

children, share the characteristics of children."

At this point Mark inserts a saying of Jesus to the effect that the person who does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. (v15) Matthew, we have seen, places this saying in the context of the discussion on greatness (18.3). The important thing to grasp is that for Mark, verse 15 explains the statement in verse 14 that children are heirs of the Kingdom. What we have here is a development of the thoughts on the nature of discipleship outlined in the pericope on the controversy about greatness. (9.33-37) There the teaching was that service to the weak was service to Jesus and that such service was the test of priority in the Kingdom of God. The argument is carried further now but still centring around children. Not only is it meritorious to serve them as to advance in the Kingdom, but one must become like them in spirit to qualify for entry." (v17)

Jesus' final action in taking the children into his arms and blessing them is reminiscent of the scene in which Simeon took up the infant Jesus in his arms (Luke 2.28), and of the father's welcome for the returning prodigal son. Sumner notes that "the compound verb and imperfect tense indicate that he blessed them fervently again and again. He granted the request of the parents, and a great deal more." (v18)

The Matthaean parallel to Mark 10.13-16 comes at Matthew 23.13-15, in the fifth section of Matthew's Gospel, which is substantially shaped by the Marcan outline. Matthew, having already made use of Mark 10.15 and having shown children as examples of the humility to be followed by all who would enter the kingdom (18.3), treats here for its own sake the issue of the children's place in the kingdom. He picks up then at this point Mark 10.15, i.e., the statement about the indignation of Jesus and that of embracing the children, but he does interpret the "touch" of Mark 10.13 as "lay his hands on them and pray." (v13) "Matthew thus understands blessing as intercession based on authority."

9.

In Luke 18.15-17, Luke takes over from Mark with little variation the story of the blessing of the children. By placing the pericope at this point in his Gospel

immediately following the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18.9-14), he intends a deliberate contrast of the child with the self-righteous Pharisee, teaching that the Kingdom must be received as a completely unmerited gift rather than earned by work. Mark had already in mind this type of contrast by placing immediately after the story of the blessing of the children, the story of the rich man and eternal life (Mark 10.17-22) which Luke retains at this point (Luke 18.18-23).

Can we identify the basis of Jesus' statements about the children and the Kingdom? B.S. Easton warned against any attempt at analyzing too minutely the quality of childlikeness involved in case we injure the thought. "If we attempt to paraphrase it in terms of formal theology we shall certainly ruin it altogether. For the quality of childlikeness is nothing more and nothing less than the quality of childlikeness and it needs no explanation; everyone knows what it is provided he does not think too much about it." /20 The warning is apposite and yet analysis cannot be evaded. Various interpretations have been offered and some of the main possibilities examined.

(a) F.A. Schilling has argued that traditional interpretations of the passage arose from the "harmonizing mind" which "subordinated the surprising remark of Jesus in Mark 10.15 to the more ordinary meaning of Matthew 18.3 and made the two mean the same thing", thus depriving Mark 10. of its originality. He reads paidion as an accusative with the meaning "whoever does not receive the Kingdom as one receives a little child". Thus it is the nature of the Kingdom which is likened to that of a child. /21 On this understanding the disciples are to welcome the kingdom as Jesus welcomes the child, an interpretation which, it is claimed, "accords well with the fact that, in this section of the Gospel, Mark's theme is the close identity of the way and conduct of the Son of Man with the way and conduct of the disciple." /22

This interpretation is grammatically possible but, in view of the parallel saying in Matthew 18.3, unlikely. Pursuing the same general line of thought, H. Anderson offers the comment that "the Kingdom of God in its nature as a child in Jesus' teaching may describe it as neither

forced men nor forced by them, but as God's gracious gift
given as the child is his gift. It is the realm of
spontaneity which is simply to be participated in with
play, where the assuming of role is forever ended, the
the realm of play." This interpretation is rather
forced and, in the absence of any parallel teaching by
Jesus, or elsewhere in the NT, on the nature of the
Kingdom as a child, highly speculative.

(b) It has been suggested that the most natural
explanation of Mark 10.13-16 is that these verses present
us with a picture of children coming to Jesus "or even
more naturally of them running to Him and clinging to Him,
affording a picture of the ideal human response to the
Lord's call in the Gospel." On this interpretation the
Kingdom belongs to the children or will be given to them,
a virtue of their coming to Jesus (Mark 10.14) and
receiving the word of the Kingdom (Mark 10.15). This is
the view proposed by Beasley-Murray who further comments
that "there is nothing strange in the idea of children
listening to Jesus, receiving in simplicity his 'call'
(invitation) to the Kingdom and of loving Him with all
their hearts"; and argues that this is "what Jesus in
the narrative before us wished to encourage." /23

This interpretation seems to founder on the basis that
there is no reference in the text to any response on the
part of the children. "The children are 'brought' to
Jesus; they are too young to come to him; they have not
yet become 'sons of the law' and are not responsible."
/24 The words of Jesus in rebuking the disciples "defend
the children who are passive and not the adults who are
rebuking the children." /25

(c) Many commentators look to some subjective quality
of children in order to interpret the sayings.
Swinson holds that "the point of comparison is not so
much the innocence and humility of children (for children
are not invariably either innocent or humble); it is rather
the fact that children are unselfconscious, receptive and
content to be dependent upon others' care and bounty; it is
such a spirit that the Kingdom must be received - it is
a gift of God and not an achievement on the part of man; it
must be simply accepted, inasmuch as it can never be

deserved." /24 From his own very distinctive approach to the Gospel of Mark, J. Bowman comes to a similar conclusion. For the Pharisees the important thing was to keep the law. But little children could not fulfil this duty. Jesus is therefore rejecting the idea of the Kingdom of God as a "torah state" and arguing that "one has to put away pride of learning - have the humility, receptiveness and meekness and trust of a little child." /27

This interpretation certainly represents one of Jesus' oft repeated criticisms of the religion of his contemporaries. "It was too often, He felt, associated with pride and a sense of self-righteousness....He condemned all thought of a claim on God whether of race or one's righteousness." /28

(d) Some scholars emphasize the "objective humbleness" of children rather than any subjective quality possessed by them, in order to stress the thought that the key theme here is "the startling character of the grace of God who wills to give the Kingdom to those who have no claim upon it." /29 C.E.B. Cranfield argues that the reference here is "not to the receptiveness or humility or imaginativeness or trustfulness or unselfconsciousness of children, but to their objective littleness and helplessness. To receive the kingdom as a little child is to allow oneself to be given to it, because one knows one cannot claim it as one's right or attempt to earn it. (To think of any subjective qualities of children here is to turn faith into a work)." H. Anderson argues along the same lines that the child here is a symbol for those who "quite objectively, are obscure, trivial, unimportant, weak"; and that to receive the Kingdom as a child is to receive it "as something given to them in their helplessness or defencelessness, without any claim on their part that they have deserved or earned it." /30

This interpretation overstates the valid point that Jesus' teaching here speaks of the gratuitous gift of the Kingdom. It is impossible to maintain a rigid distinction between a situation of "objective humbleness" and the existence in those in such a situation of certain subjective dispositions. The element of response to the Gospel cannot be eliminated simply because a wrong emphasis on this would

make it a work of merit.

(e) Should this attitude of childhood be identified with "faith"? Légasse argues that the condition of becoming a disciple can indeed be summed up in the one word "faith" and that this gives us the correct key to the interpretation of Mark 10.13-16. /31 The emphasis which we have seen in Matthew's version of Mark 10.15 (Matthew 18.3) would tend to support such a solution, for the insistence on faith is very closely connected with the call to repentance. The message of Jesus is summarized at Mark 1.15 in the words, "the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel."

But faith is itself a complex concept even in the synoptic tradition of the teaching of Jesus. Légasse puts his main emphasis on the aspect of faith as trust, holding that this best accords with the use of the child imagery in Mark 10.13-16. Now it is without question that trust is a basic constituent of faith in the teaching of Jesus. Granted that the attitude of trust in the relationship of a child with its parents may be symbolic of this aspect of faith, and that the concept of faith is properly related to the child as a model, it is however doubtful, in view of the complex nature of the concept of faith, if we can find here the single interpretative factor.

The positive factors that we have noted in these various proposed interpretations can possibly be held together by returning to a suggestion made by T.W. Manson that a clue to "the better understanding of those sayings of Jesus about the necessity of becoming like children if we are to enter the Kingdom of God" might be found in the distinctive and characteristic use by Jesus of the term Abba for "God" and his teaching of the disciples to use the same term." /32 In later lectures on the Lord's Prayer, Manson developed this idea and commented that "when Jesus tells his hearers that it is necessary to humble oneself and become like a child in order to enter the Kingdom of God, he is not suggesting that the child is the possessor of virtues which his elders have lost, and that adults should take lessons in morality from their children. He is pointing to the plain fact that the child

is dependent on his father and that in any decent family the relation between parent and child is that of care and protection on the one side and dependence and trust on the other. This means that the primary condition of entry into the Kingdom of God is total trust in God springing from a sense of total dependence upon him. The total love of God which is required in the first and greatest commandment springs naturally from this trust and dependence." /33

Jeremias also sees this as the key thought. "Children can say 'Abba'. Only he who through Jesus lets himself be given the childlike trust which resides in the word abba finds his way into the Kingdom of God." This is indeed the heart of the call to repentance in Matthew 18.3: 'repentance means learning to say Abba again, putting one's whole trust in the Heavenly Father, returning to the Father's house and the Father's arms. Luke 15.11-32 provides evidence that this understanding might not be completely wrong. The repentance of the lost son consists in his finding his way home to his Father. In the last resort repentance is simply trusting in the grace of God." /34

This interpretation has the advantage of relating Jesus' use of the child as a model of spirituality with his general teaching on the father-child relationship that is the basic model. It has the advantage also of taking full account of the teaching of Jesus on the Fatherhood of God, which is, in the last resort, the fundamental basis for his call to repentance and faith, to discipleship on the model of his own sonship. It allows emphasis to be put on the gracious goodness of the Heavenly Father in giving the Kingdom as a gift to those in need, but without calling into question the need for response, even if the response that is stressed at this point is that of receptivity.

In the interpretation, then, of the texts concerning Jesus and the children it is not necessary either to search for some subjective quality inherent in the nature of the child or to postulate a somewhat impersonal condition of objective humbleness; the positive values in both these approaches being more naturally expressed in terms of the general stance of Jesus in regard to the child in the child-father relationship. The themes of humility and faith are blended together in the call to a relationship of a childlike trust in God as abba, Jesus displaying both in his words and actions that compelling love for children

which he taught was God's fundamental disposition to men. The reflection of the early Christians on the uniqueness of the person of Jesus and on their experience of being led through his life and work into a new relationship with God which could be expressed in the conviction that God is our abba, led to a natural attempt to find ways of adequately describing the unique sonship of Christ and the derived sonship of Christians.

This is the context in which the later concepts of adoption and rebirth are developed, allowing particular emphasis in the use of the father-child imagery to be placed on the gracious choice of God the Father and the relationship of this with the Christ event, but preserving the central emphasis of Jesus' own teaching. The concept of adoption also opened up new ways of expressing the significance of sonship in terms of status and heritage, while the connection of rebirth imagery with baptism opened up the possibility of recognizing not only the importance of birth and childhood but also of the need for growth. The need for growth in the Christian life was expressed indeed in such imagery both by Paul and other NT writers, but reference to the child at this point is pejorative in nature, the child being a symbol of what must be left behind on the road to maturity. Here indeed it may be proper to look for certain subjective attitudes in children or to define their objective status of immaturity. There is tension at this point in the biblical writings between the use of the child and the mature person as a model of spirituality, a tension that was capable of being developed creatively to hold together complementary aspects of faith, but which could lead to such an emphasis on the need for progress and growth that the free grace and love of God calling for a response of simple, childlike trust might be obscured.

In the early centuries of the Christian Church, when the ascetic concept of gospel holiness became the idea of spirituality, with the Christian life seen essentially in terms of "ascent", and emphasis put on obedience to a new law rather than on the primary feature of redeeming grace, there is indeed a real loss of the teaching of Jesus on the child as a model. It is not surprising that the great reformer of Christian piety in this regard should have been Augustine, for it is with him that the sovereign

grace of God is once again given its central place in Christian thought.

Notes

1. A. Deissler, "The Spirit of the Lord's Prayer in the Faith and Worship of the OT", in J.J. Petuchowski and M. Broche, eds., The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy, London 1978
2. G. Ebeling, The Lord's Prayer in Today's World, London, 1966, p54
3. J. Jeremias, The Lord's Prayer, Philadelphia 1964, p20.
4. C.F.D. Moule, Mark, Cambridge 1965, p74
5. C.E.B. Cranfield, Mark, Cambridge 1972, p308
6. W. Barclay, Mark, Edinburgh 1956, p231. It is not easy to determine the precise meaning of the phrase "in my name" in v37. "Behind this formula", states Weber, "lies a Semitic expression which, in the Gospels, is often better rendered with 'for my sake' or 'for my name's sake'. (cf. Mark 8.35/10.29/13.9). It points to a relationship. The children are to be hospitably received because of Jesus' special relationship with them, because they are his special representatives." The nature of this relationship is not here further defined: H.B. Weber, Jesus and the Children, Geneva, 1979, p50
7. B.H. Branscomb, Mark, London 1937, p169
8. E. Schweizer, Matthew, London 1976, p362
9. See e.g., F. Laubach, in NIDNTT Vol 1, Exeter 1975-78 p355.
10. J. Haroutinia in M. Halverson and A. Cohen, Eds., A Handbook of Christian Theology, London 1960, p324f
11. R. Schnackenburg, The Moral Teaching of the NT, London 1965, p29f
12. E. La B. Cherbonnier in Dictionary of the Bible (J. Hastings ed., revised by F.C. Grant and H.H. Rowley) Edinburgh 1963, p406f

13. The Lucan parallel to Mark 9.33-37 comes at Luke 9.46-48 and in the same context as in Mark. The child is here not only a symbol of the weak and needy, service of whom in Christ's name is service to Christ and God, but it is at the same time a model of that humility which is the condition of true greatness in the Kingdom of God. It is this latter idea that, as we have seen, Matthew brings out clearly and makes primary, and thus Luke "occupies an intermediate position between the Marcan and the Matthaean versions of our Lord's treatment of the disciples' idea on this occasion". (H. Balmforth, Luke, Oxford 1930, p195)
14. V. Taylor, Mark, London 1966, p425
15. G.R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the NT, Exeter 1972, p324. For a review of arguments for and against a baptismal context for the interpretation of these verses see E. Best, "Mark 10.13-16: The child as model recipient," in R. McKay and J.F. Miller, eds., Biblical Studies: Essays in honour of W. Barclay, London, 1976, p324.
16. Taylor, op.cit., p423
17. J. Bowman, Mark, Leiden 1965, p211
18. A. Plummer, Mark, Cambridge 1915, p121f
19. E. Schweizer, Matthew, London 1946, p384
20. B.S. Easton, Christ in the Gospels, New York 1930, p152
21. F.A. Schilling, "What means the saying about receiving the Kingdom of God as a Little Child?" in C.L. Mitton, ed., Expository Times 1965-66, Vol 77/2 p56-58, Edinburgh
22. H. Anderson, Mark, London 1976, p246
23. Beasley-Murray, op.cit., pp326,328
24. E. Best, op.cit., p132
25. E. Schweizer, Mark, London 1971, p206
26. Rawlinson, op.cit., p136f. See also C.F. Moule op.cit., p79 who states that "perhaps the point is that God's reign can only be received by those who know that they are utterly dependent on God, as small children are

on their parents; they cannot earn it or deserve it or make it, but only accept it gratefully as God's gift".

27. Bowman, op.cit., p212
28. Branscomb, op.cit., p180
29. W.L. Lane, Mark, London 1974, p360
30. Cranfield, op.cit., p324; Anderson, op.cit., p246
31. Légasse, Jésus et l'enfant, Paris 1969, p139f
32. T.W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, Cambridge 1963, p331
33. T.W. Manson, "The Lord's Prayer II" in BJRL, Vol 38, 1955-56, p437f
34. J. Jeremias, The Lord's Prayer, London 1971; The Theology of the NT, Vol 1, London 1971, p156

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Splitting Hairs in Israel and Babylon.

Wilfred G.E. Watson

According to Zimmerli /1 the shaving, weighing and disposal of hair described in Ezek 5.1-5 belong to a set of three symbolic actions described in 3.25-5.4a, the original text of which ran as follows. /2

- I And you, son of man - take a brick
 and lay it before you
 and draw upon it a city
 and lay siege to it
 and build siegeworks against it
 and set up a siege wall against it
 and establish battering rams round about
- II Andyou - take wheat and barley
 and beans and lentils and millet and spelt
 and put them into the same pot
 and make bread of them for yourself
 and your food shall be 20 shekels a day:
 at regular times shall you eat it.
 And water you shall drink by measure, a sixth
 of a hin:
 at regular times you shall drink.
- III And you, son of man - take a sharp sword
 and pass it over your head and beard:
 and take a balance
 and divide it (the hair).
 One third you shall burn with fire:
 and one third you shall cut up with the sword
 and one third you shall scatter to the wind

The Babylonian background to Stanza I (or, Symbolic Action 1) is transparent: clay tablets comprised the commonest medium for writing and for drawing city plans and the like the evidence is conveniently presented by Zimmerli. /3 As for Stanza II. the cereals listed there point to no specific local background. However, the reference to the loaf per day (4.9 - omitted by Zimmerli) echoes the same time-counting device in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Also, fo

Hebrew "round-cake" (4.12. also omitted in Zimmerli's reconstructed text) LXX has ἄσπιδος "ash-baked bread". the exact equivalent of kamān tumri as used in the roof-ritual of a Babylonian text (see presently). Quite possibly then Zimmerli's excisions cannot be justified by the neatness claimed for the "original" text (as above).

Having established the Babylonian background to Stanzas I and II we now come to the main subject of this brief note, namely Stanza III (or Symbolic Act 3). Up till now no parallel could be cited for this Stanza. Related texts such as Isa 5.12: Jer 41.5: 48.37 and passages from the Ugaritic Baal Cycle /4 refer to acts of mourning and therefore are not relevant. However a recently edited set of Babylonian texts /5 does now provide the background (Babylonian, of course) for this third symbolic action even if some problems remains unsolved. In this set of Babylonian texts there is a passage which comes in part of a complex ritual designed to cure someone suffering from a whole range of symptoms, including epilepsy, shivering, total indecision and the like /6 . The ritual goes as follows. In a sheep pen everything is made ready. An unmated kid bought for a loaf of ask-baked bread is fed on tamarisk for a day. At night the roof is swept and sprinkled and an altar set up to Ishtar. Offerings of food and drink are provided and Gula the goddess of healing is offered loaves of bread. Incense and beer is also offered. The rubric continues:

"You hold a balance high. place the hair of his (the patient's) head and the hem of his garment and weigh them."

A special song is sung. Next the kid is slaughtered its heart roasted and its hide placed near the paraphernalia. The sick man then raises his hand and recites an incantation three times, the texts of which includes a reference to the balance prepared by the officiant for the weighing of hair and hem (line 32). /7

Both texts (Ezek 5.1-5 and the Babylonian ritual) share the following common features:

- (1) removal of hair (by implication in the Babylonian text but see footnote 7)
- (2) weighing of hair on a balance;
- (3) reference to the hem of a garment. /8

There are also difference. In the Babylonian text no explanation is given for weighing hair and hem /9 and the ritual is magic and complex. The passage from Ezekial on the other hand is very clearly a symbolic and not a magical act and its explanation is provided in 5.12 (cf 5.17 also). With due allowance for later elaboration /9 it can be schematized as follows:

one-third burnt in city /10 - pestilence and famine

one-third cut up by sword - death by sword

one-third scattered to wind - dispersion /11

Beneath the features shared by both traditions at the surface lie deeper common concepts. In both it would seem the hair represents the person involved (Ezekial the prophet represented Israel so his hair was equivalent to the whole nation) /12 . Also actions are not empty gestures but betoken events: in Babylonia at the level of (sympathetic) magic; in Israel as prophecy. /13

Finally although the Babylonian text discussed provides an undeniable Babylonian setting for Ezek 5.1-5 in line with the other two symbolic actions Ezekial need not necessarily have depended on that particular text.

Notes

1. W. Zimmerli, Ezekial 1. A Commentary on the Book of the Propeht Ezekial. Chs 1-24 (Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1979; translation of BKAT XIII/I, 1969) 155-156.
2. The text reproduced here is Zimmerli's; the complete text is set out (in translation, with notes) in Ezekial 1, 148-151. The full text for Ezek 5.1-5 runs: "And you, son of man, take a sharp sword; use it as a razor and pass it over your head and beard. And take a balance and divide it (ie, the hair). One third you shall **burn** in the city with

fire when the days of the siege are completed; and one third you shall take and cut up with the sword around it, and one third you shall scatter to the wind. And I will draw the sword after them. And you shall take from there a small number and bind them in the skirt of your garment. And you shall take (some) of them and throw them into the fire and burn them with fire. And you shall say to the whole house of Israel: Thus has the Lord Yahweh said: This is Jerusalem! I have set it in the midst of the nations with the lands round about it."

3. Zimmerli, Ezekial 1, 161-162. Clay tablets were also used for Ugaritic, Hittite, Elamite, Linear B etc., but scarcely if at all in Palestine.

4. See, conveniently, J.C.L. Gibson, Canaanite Myths and Legends (Clark, Edinburgh 1978) 73 (vi 17-19) and 74 (i 2-3)

5. W. Farber, Beschwörungsrituale an Ishtar und Dumuzi (Steiner, Wiesbaden 1977)

6. The complete set of symptoms which includes dumbness could easily apply to Ezekial himself.

7. See Farber, op.cit., 64-67 (A Ia 14-21 esp. 18-19; and 32). The act of tearing hair from the sick man's forehead and ripping away of his hem (154, 203-204) in what is essentially a mourning ritual arose from confusion with the ritual just described (see Farber's comment 106). Similar confusion may have occurred in our Ezekial passage which mentions binding a small number of hairs in the hem of his garment (5.3).

8. As mention (note 7) this element may be an interpolation in both texts. See too the last part of note 13.

9. See Zimmerli, Ezekial 1, 152 AND 176

10. "By fire" is unnecessary and ill fits the Hebrew; a possibility to be considered is "on the roof" (cf. Akkadian uru, "roof") as in the Babylonian ritual. Scattering to the winds would be more dramatic from the

roof-top.

11. There are Ugaritic parallels to these actions, namely, two descriptions of how Mot (death) was destroyed.

They run: "She (Anath) seized divine Mot, with a sword she split him, with a sieve she winnowed him, with fire she burnt him, with millstones she ground him, in a field she scattered him" - and "Because of you, Baal, I have suffered abasement, splitting with the sword, burning with fire, grinding with millstones, winnowing with the riddle, scattering in the sea" (Translation: Gibson, op.cit., 77 and 79, with abridgement).

12. Goat's hair for example was used to represent a person in certain Babylonian rituals (namburbi)

13. Ezek 5.1-5 is not discussed by M.I. Gruber, Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East (Studia Pohl 12, Rome 1980). It would be interesting to determine whether the hem connotes an element of supplication as established for other texts by E. Greenstein, " 'To grasp the hem' in Ugaritic Literature", VT 32 (1982) 217-218.

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Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century

R. Buick Knox

The seventeenth century has often been seen as a century of revolution, a period when royal claims withered before the relentless advance of the power of Parliament and when traditional forms of thought in the realms of science and religion were eroded by empirical research and by aggressive nonconformity. /1

This reading of the situation has recently come under heavy criticism and much emphasis has been placed upon the tenacious conservatism of the period and upon the way in which revolutionary constitutional and religious movements were tamed and neutralized. Professor J.P. Kenyon can now write of the years after 1660 as a period of "an exaggeratedly conservative reaction which swept away - as if it had never been - the so-called English Revolution of the 1640s. /2 Moving on to 1714 he can conclude that the constitution which emerged as a result of the accession of William and Mary and of the Hanoverians was not a parliamentary monarchy but an aristocratic monarchy. /3

In unravelling the complex web of religious life during the seventeenth century later historians, and especially those with interests in the social and political ramifications of ecclesiastical affairs, have seen in the panorama of dissenting movements ranging from reluctant nonconformists to revolutionary sectarians the segment of society which contained the period's most influential manifestation of theological thought and religious practice. However, this view also needs not a little deflation. Nonconformists were never anywhere a majority of the people and, as for the revolutionary threat which they seemed to pose to political stability, this failed to come to permanent fruition. The Civil War was far from being a crusade by apocalyptic revolutionaries against the existing order in society; it seemed far more like a struggle for power within the traditional ruling class. Even Cromwell's rule was far from being what would now be called a dictatorship of the proletariat though even then it was sufficiently novel and alarming to drive many into the movement to restore the monarchy.

A surer guide to the prevailing trend of current theological thought in the century is to be found in the sermons and writings of the bishops of the Church of England than in the serious prolixity of puritan preachers, the frenzied fervour of evanescent orators, or the novel speculations of dissonant voices. John Milton and Isaac Watts have been accorded great renown as influential nonconformists who had a decisive role in shaping English culture and hymnology. Yet in their own day their influence was confined to limited circles. Milton ended his life in blindness, loneliness and not a little despair; Watt was also a frail and reclusive figure depending for shelter upon the generosity of Lady Abner. Moreover, when they achieved later renown it was on the strength of their poetical works which embodied the traditional orthodox doctrinal framework or which at least could be read in that sense and which have become the acknowledged treasure of all the Churches. It is only in recent years that the christological deviations of Watts and the doctrinal, ethical and social speculations of Milton have received attention. /4 Further, it has been held that Thomas Hobbes was representative of a substantial group of subversive thinkers whose teaching led to atheism, but Hobbes never claimed to be an atheist; indeed, the idea of God looms large in his thought, and it has been argued that it is central to his thought, though others have maintained that it could be eliminated from his writings without seriously affecting his teaching and that he only introduced the idea into his speculations as an insurance against the penalties likely to befall anyone who had the temerity to question the existence of God. However, even if there was a group of subversive thinkers, they had remarkably little effect in shaking the current patterns of thought. /5 Professor G.E. Aylmer has said that a self-confessed atheist was a rare figure in the century; "those who explicitly denied the existence of God are hard to find." /6

The dominant and persisting strand of religious thought was to be found in the outlook and teaching of the bishops of the Church of England. Many of them were men of ability who would have risen high in any profession and they were a cohesive group, shaped as they were by their close ties with the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and with the

Court and the nobility. /7 They owed their promotion to their accord with the climate of thought and conduct to be found in those circles and which permeated the general outlook in society far more than might be thought if attention were to be concentrated on the vast number of turbulent pamphlets which poured forth from many presses, and even these often blended a theological conservatism with their fiery and political agitation.

The coherence of the episcopal outlook can be seen in their treatment of the Bible. The bishops claimed that it was penned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the text had been preserved through the centuries and was what God wanted it to be. In view of its divine origin, texts could be taken from any and every part of the Bible and used to teach matters of faith and morals and of government, history and science. John Hacket of Lichfield was typical in affirming the unique authority of the Bible:

"We are penned up into the Scripture as into sheepfolds, and while we contain ourselves within them we are safe; the wolf may howl but he cannot bite us"

Jeremy Taylor, who became bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore and gained a reputation as a devout scholar and rigid disciplinarian, said,

"If any man calls himself a Christian, he believes all that is in the Canon of Scripture, and therefore if he did not he were indeed no Christian."

John Bramhall, who first as bishop of Derry and then as archbishop of Armagh imposed a firm episcopal policy upon the Church of Ireland, was equally firm in his teaching on the Bible:

"God, who hath given the Holy Scriptures to his Church to be the key to his revealed counsels, the anchor of hope, the evidence of their blessedness, will not suffer those Scriptures to be corrupted in anything that is fundamental and necessary."

John Cosin of Durham held that the Creator could not possibly have left his creatures without a clear and permanent statement of his intentions, far more definite than any-

thing to be derived from the flickering light of reason;
"From this Scripture which is the word and will
of God all the rules of our life and all the
articles of our belief must of reason be drawn." /11

Ralph Brownrig of Exeter was a spacious exponent of the view
that since the Scriptures were the oracles of God they had
a closely woven texture which at all points bore witness to
Christ who was the sum and scope of all their predictions.
Christ was

"Adam's promised seed, Abraham's Isaac, Jacob's
Shiloh, Moses his great prophet, Esau's Immanuel,
Jeremiah's man compassed with a woman, Ezekial's
shepherd, Daniel's holy one, Zechariah's branch,
Malachi's Angel". /12

Taking another sweep through the Bible he found Christ to be
Abel's sacrifice, Noel's dove, Abraham's first fruits,
Isaac's ram, Jacob's ladder, Moses his Passover, Aaron's
rod, the Israelite's rock, the Patriarch's manna, David's
tabernacle and Solomon's temple. /13

This belief in the divine authorship of the scriptures,
their total consistency and their hidden witness to Christ
was the basic conviction of these episcopal preachers and
their belief was not shaken by problems arising from the
formation of the Canon, by difficulties of translation, by
textual obscurities, or by the possibility that the text
as it now is had come into being through the weaving
together of earlier and diverse strands of tradition.
They were far too learned to be unaware of many problems
of text and interpretation but they were confident that
these problems would prove to be peripheral and that careful
study would so resolve the issues that their basic conviction
would be unshaken.

Bramhall held that while there was need to secure the
best text and the soundest interpretation arguments about
variant readings and meanings were to be deplored; neither
the weakest text nor the worst translation was far off the
mark, and public wranglings on such issues were "liable to
shake that Christian faith which is radicated in the heart";
"To suffer the sacred writ to be questioned in a word or
syllable was to weaken the authority and lessen the
venerable estimation of the whole text." /14

John Tillotson, the archbishop of Canterbury at the end of the century, laid down the axiom that the various books of the Bible had gained their place in the Canon in virtue of their internal claims. The witness of the NT to the Old the reliability of the records insofar as it is possible to test them, and the authorship of the NT by the inspired Apostles or by men under their tutelage, all these factors attested the integrity of the existing Canon; no other books had a comparable claim to inclusion. Neither ecclesiastical nor civil rulers could adjudicate on the question of what constituted the Canon:

"The Church cannot make a book canonical which was not so before; if it was not canonical at first, it cannot be made so afterward." /15

Similarly, Edward Reynolds of Norwich accepted without question the existing Canon and held that its authority was established by its perspicacity in "all necessary truth". /16 Seth Ward, bishop of Exeter and then of Salisbury, held that Christ's use of the OT was more than sufficient authentication of its canonicity, and as for the NT there was no dissentient doctrine in any of its books which were written in the order in which they were placed in the Testament and also by the authors whose names they bore. /17

However, even allowing the fixed bounds of the Canon and the reliability of the text, there were baffling problems of interpretation. Many passages were differently interpreted by various preachers and it was also recognized that there were OT passages attributing to God deeds of vengeance and genocide which would need ingenious interpretation if they were to be given a meaning compatible with the definition of God as righteous, just and merciful. Lancelot Andrewes, successively bishop of Chichester, Ely and Winchester, was one of the translators of the Authorised version of the Bible and his advocacy and use of the new translation were powerful factors in its rapid superseding of all other translations. He held that the Bible could be read in four senses. The first and basic was the literal sense, the second the analogical, the third the moral, and the fourth the prophetic. He saw the dangers of fanciful meanderings but he held that by a careful use of these methods the Bible could be made to yield a harmonious unfolding of God's

purpose; for example, he found an interlocking meaning in the stories of Moses climbing Sinai, David climbing Zion, and Jesus climbing Calvary. /18 Robert Sanderson of Lincoln recognized the complexities in Scripture: "the well is deep and buckets for want of cordage will not reach the bottom", but this weakness is in the reader and not in the Scripture, and the profundities of God could only be imparted through resemblances and riddles which "fell far short of the nature and excellency of the things themselves".

/19 Hacket held that "the whole mass of Scripture is of one consent and one harmony", but easy and difficult passages were so mingled that the reader never grasped the whole sense at one reading but there was always fruit to be gathered and expected at further readings unto the end of the world. /20 Hacket also held that the reader has to acclimatize himself to the styles of the different writers if their meaning is to be grasped; there was the stately eloquence of Isaiah, the logical arguments of Paul, the facile exhortations of Peter and the celestial hymns of Luke but "variety is delectable when it does not jar but makes up a unity." /21

Taylor held that the surest way to reach the soundest interpretation was to resort to the great teachers of the Church: "the practice of the Catholic Church is the best commentary"... "let the consent of the Catholic Church be your measure." /22 Taylor was sure that this had been well-preserved in the Church of England where "in things simply necessary, God hath preserved us still unbroken." Even in this appeal to a universal consent Taylor realized there were risks and, in arguing against the papal claims that Roman Catholic teaching was based on the unanimous consent of the Fathers, Taylor claimed there was no such consent especially where distinctive papal teaching was concerned. Taylor also held that the literal sense should normally be followed, but it had to be avoided when there were deviations from purity and consistency. In such cases a hidden spiritual meaning had to be sought, though here also restraint had to be used. Origen's hieroglyphic interpretations were often too ingenious and "searching for articles of faith in the by-paths and corners of secret places leads not to faith but to infidelity." /23 Reynolds also issued a warning against "the affectation of

allegories and forced allusions in Origen." /24

Simon Patrick, who had been an exemplary London rector in the time of the great plague and then reluctantly became bishop of Chichester and then of Ely, was troubled by the unpleasant incidents recorded in the OT and especially when attributed to God's own decision. Instead of trying to iron out the unpleasantness by literary ingenuity, Patrick contrasted such incidents with the later proof of God's mercy in Christ. The unfolding story showed that Christian had got a "greater abundance of God's grace than he bestowed in former times." /25 This recognition of the increasing revelation and clearer apprehension of God's grace marked a slight and probably unintentional move from the earlier insistence that God had revealed himself equally in all the Scriptures and that the fullness of the gospel was to be found in all the Bible by those who had eyes to discern it.

At the end of the century, John Williams of Chichester attempted to bring the scientific method to bear upon his study of the Bible. He sought to deal with textual variations and he tried to weave the two Testaments into a historical sequence with an unfolding story but even he did not raise any questions about the weight of the different strands in the fabric or about the literal accuracy of the records. He laid much stress upon the fulfilment of prophetic anticipations and upon the miracles in the lives of OT figures. The historical accounts in the early chapters of Genesis had been derived from the patriarchs and the scribes who had access to the facts, and their records bore the marks of ability, impartiality and care. In themselves there was an obvious consistency and credibility, but where there were parallel pagan sources, though they contained much dross, they had sufficient fine gold to confirm the Scripture which had proved to be "the most exact, faithful and impartial relation the world ever had." /26 Nevertheless, Williams also considered the variety of styles among the biblical writers and he concluded that while God inspired the writers, he left them to express the matter in their own way but agreeing in "the drift and substance" of the revelation. Here indeed was the influence, probably unconscious, of the increasingly critical temper which was to blossom in later time. The "drift and substance" was rather different

from the literal exactitude which Williams professed to discern in the Scriptures. /27 Williams also introduced the note of probability into his examination of the historicity of the biblical stories. He said the Canon was penned by inspired persons and was based on "as much evidence as we have or can have for anything past or distant in time or place from us and which we ourselves have not seen" and he added that a venial error by an original writer or by a subsequent transcriber would not have been a mortal stab at the veracity of Scripture. /28 Tillotson also admitted that the "undoubted certainty" of the Scripture record was "as sure as any matter of fact at such a distance from the time it was done is capable of." /29 Thus there were preachers who were aware of awkward textual and expository problems but they all sought to deal with them within the common belief that God had inspired the writers, that the text and Canon were as God intended them to be, and that there was an inner consistency in the Bible which made every part thereof a mine from which sure guidance for doctrine and morality could be extracted. This remained the prevailing outlook until the startling new scientific, historical and theological investigations and speculations in the nineteenth century compelled readers of the Bible to re-examine and reshape their inherited framework of biblical thought.

Notes

1. C. Hill, The Century of Revolution, 1961
2. J.P. Kenyon, Stuart England, 1978, 34
3. Ibid, 356
4. C. Hill, Milton and the English Revolution, 1977
5. J. Plamenatz (ed.), Leviathan by T. Hobbes: H. Warrender, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes, 1957. Also, see R.B. Knox, "The History of Doctrine in the Seventeenth Century", in A History of Christian Doctrine, ed. by H. Cunliffe-Jones, 1978, 448-449.
6. G.E. Aylmer, "Unbelief in Seventeenth-century England" in D. Pennington and K. Thomas (eds), Puritans and

Revolutionaries, 1978, 22

7. R.B. Knox, "Bishops in the Pulpit in the Seventeenth Century: Continuity amid Change" in R.B. Knox (ed.), Reformation, Conformity and Dissent, 1977.
 8. J. Hacket, A Century of Sermons, 1675, 283; see also 989
 9. J. Taylor, Works (ed. R. Heber) 1839, VI, 287
 10. J. Bramhall, Works, 1845, V, 115-6.
 11. J. Cosin, Works, 1843, I, 285
 12. R. Brownrig, Forty Sermons, 1661, 108
 13. R. Brownrig, Twenty-five Sermons, 1664, 10-11
 14. Bramhall, Works, V, 115.
 15. J. Tillotson, Works (ed. 1743), VII, 2039; also 2215, 22
 16. E. Reynolds, Works, 1826, V, 153
 17. S. Ward, Six Sermons, 1672, 83-5, also 109ff., 129-30, 141.
 18. L. Andrewes, Works 1841-54, III, 22
 19. R. Sanderson, Twenty-one Sermons, 1681, 128-9; also 156
 20. Hacket, *op.cit.*, 283
 21. *Ibid*, 470
 22. Taylor, *op.cit.*, VI, 520-1
 23. *Ibid*, 516
 24. Reynolds, *op.cit.*, V, 342
 25. S. Patrick, A Sermon on December 8, 1678, 31
 26. J. Williams, The Boyle Sermons, 1708, 189
 27. *Ibid*, 208-9
 28. *Ibid*, 192, 214
 29. Tillotson, *op.cit.*, XI, 4932-6
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The Structural Principle of Matthew's Gospel

Kevin Smyth

This is not a search for the arrangement of the doors and windows, so to speak, in the structure, corresponding to fourteen generations (ch.1), seven beatitudes (5), ten miracles (8,9), seven parables (13), the many groups of threes e.g., alms, prayer and fasting (6), the five discourses ending with "When Jesus had finished these words....." and so on. Structure here means the "information" in the sense re-adopted by modern biology, the ruling idea which gives the "through-line" or the "tram-lines" on which everything more or less rides. These latter terms are from Stanislavsky, the Russian actor, director and theorist of the modern theatre (1865-1938). The search for the ruling idea had wide success in modern drama. It helped directors to prevent stars stealing scenes. It could keep parts and speeches in their proper proportion, and make sure that lines were not "thrown away". The only novelty for such a search in biblical would be the terms. Commentators have often sought for the "Middle" of the OT or the NT, for the "message of Matthew" and the like. For Matthew the ruling idea has often been seen as "The Messiah...." with various addenda. Here it is suggested that the ruling idea should be formulated in some such terms as (a) "In spite of sufficient signs - (b) the Jewish people refused to believe in Jesus Christ - (c) but he was manifested as Son of God - (d) and gathered his people." More briefly, since the "signs of the times" (Mt 16.3) are insisted on in all the gospels, as is the unbelief of the Jews, it could be said that the Messiah does not appear without his kingdom. But there are reasons, which will appear below, for avoiding such terminology. The best brief formula for Mt would be: Jesus Christ is shown to be Son of God, gathering his people. There are four contexts in which this structural arch is most clearly visible, with its four constituent elements.

(a) Sufficient signs

The main signs for the people, represented by their king and their religious leaders (2.1,4), are the rising of the star and the fulfilment of the prophecy of Micah given in 2.1-6. Only "all Jerusalem," (2,3) is said to have heard the good news of the star, but since the "chief priests and scribes" are said to be "of the people", Matthew says that ALL Israel knew, eventually at least. That the whole people is involved also follows from the lament (2.18), "Rachel bemoaning her children." It is strange, in view of Matthew's constant dredging for OT quotations to enhance his story, that there is no reference in Matthew to "the star will arise out of Jacob" (Numbers 24.17). The text seems to have been widely used. It was exploited to the full in the Damascus document (7.18-20), "The star is the Searcher of the Law....as it is written, 'A star shall come out of Jacob and a sceptre arise out of Israel'. The sceptre is the Ruler of all the congregation", etc. Then, in the early part of the second century AD, the star was referred to Bar Koseba, known as Bar Kocheba, Son of the star, called the "Star of Jacob, the King Messiah" by Rabbi Akiba. Possibly Matthew was not as familiar with the world of Jewish thought as is sometimes said.

(b) Unbelief

Consternation is all that is evoked among the people by the announcement of the birth of the "King of the Jews". Naturally, "Herod the king" was disturbed, but why "all Jerusalem with him" (2.3)? It has been suggested that the people feared Herod's security police. This is possible. The people of Bethlehem soon had reason enough. But the dismay in the city rather points on to the reaction of the Gadarenes (8.28-34) When they got their signs, "all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighbourhood". The people's reaction to the magis' news is a pre-run of their behaviour when Jesus finally arrived in Jerusalem himself. "The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to destroy Jesus" (27.20). There will be more of such foreshadowings in Matthew's chapter 2. It is already preparing for the "no such faith in Israel" of 8.10ff.

Herod, chief priests and people form a unified front in Matthew, representing "the Jews." They were in fact constantly "in dispute". Less understandable, perhaps, even than the general consternation, is the immobility of the "chief priests and the scribes of the people" when they had identified Bethlehem, and learned of the sign in the sky. As will occur regularly in Matthew, such massive unbelief is followed by a parting of the ways. Rachel now mourns her children "because they are not" (2.18). The children of Rachel are the whole Jewish people. Topographical reflections on the site of Rachel's tomb, near Bethlehem or not, are out of place in reading Matthew. He speaks in the tones of Amos 8.2, "The end is come upon my people Israel".

(c) Jesus Christ, Son of God.

The background of sufficient (not, of course, efficacious) signs meeting unbelief is common, in one way or another, to the four gospels. It is the collocation of the next two items that is specific. Jesus Christ has been presented as "son of David, son of Abraham" (1.1). This is merely genealogical. Jesus Christ is a proper name, as it always is in Paul, and in the early title given to believers, "Christians" (Acts 11.26; cf. Herodians, Caesareans). And "son of David" cannot mean the great king from the house of David who is finally to put things right (Psalms of Solomon, c. 60 BC), since Joseph is also called "son of David" (1.20). It is even very doubtful that "Jesus called Christ" at the end of the genealogy (1.16), could be translated "Jesus called Messiah", as in the New English Bible (OUP, CUP 1970). In every instance in which the phrase "N called NN" appears, what follows "called" is a proper name: "Simon called Peter" (4.18); "a man in the customs called Matthew" (9.9; so also 2.23; 26.3, 14, 36; 27.16, 23). And there are other considerations which will come up later. The fact is that Matthew's interest in the "Messiah" was slight. And when he used the (Greek) title, he meant something different from the king expected by the Jews; by most of them at any rate. Evidence for their expectations in the first century

is confined to Acts 1.6, according to J.S. van der Woude, TWNT Vol 9 (1973) p513.

For the status of Jesus, the fourteen generations of 1.17 should be significant, but it is now lost on us. All that 1.1-17 does for readers now is to present Jesus as a descendant of Abraham (a Jew therefore; 3.9) and as of royal descent. Matthew only really takes flight when he records that Jesus' mother, who turns out to be a virgin, has "conceived of the Holy Spirit". The unique traits of Jesus begin here (In John 1.13 "born of God" and in 3.16, "born of the Spirit", is said in quite a different sense). He is to be called Jesus because "he will save his people from their sins" (1.21). This is the first of many instances in Matthew where Jesus acts as only Yahweh does in the OT. He "saves from sin", which is Yahweh's work: "He will redeem Israel from all its iniquities" (Ps 130.8). In the great majority of cases of "saving" in the OT, salvation is rescue from enemies. Actual parallels to Matthew 1.21 are rare, the closest perhaps being "I will save you from all your impurities" (Ezek 36.39). Saving from sin not seen as a "messianic" work. In the Psalms of Solomon the coming King will exterminate the wicked and provide the pious with a situation where the law can be observed and enforced (esp. Ps. 17). Further, it is "his" people whom Jesus will save. Throughout the OT, it would have been "my, Yahweh's people". If the title, then, "Immanuel" (1.23) is read in the light of the predicates given Jesus in 1.21, it will be seen to mean something substantially different from what it did in Isaiah 7.14. The meaning will be put beyond doubt by 18.20, "There I am in the midst of them", and finally by the last line of the gospel, "I will be with you always" (28.20).

The magi ask for the "king of the Jews", a modest enough title, which seems also allotted to Herod (2.3). But the magi have come to "adore" the king signalled by the star. "Adore" always has its full religious sense in Matthew where it occurs 13 times to four in all in Mark and Luke. Only believers adore Jesus, just as only believers address him as "Lord". An instructive passage is to be found at 8.18-22 where the would-be disciple who failed to make the grade does not get beyond "Master", while the actual disciples say "Lord" (8.22,25;14.28 etc). Sufficiently

decisive for the meaning of "adore" in Matthew is the Temptation. The devil has shown Jesus the kingdoms of the world, and asks him to fall down and adore him in order to have them. Jesus answers, "The Lord God you shall adore, and him only shall you serve" (4.9,10). The sense of adoration in the full meaning of the word is confirmed in 2.11,12: "Falling down the magi adored him, and opening their treasures, offered him gifts, gold, incense, and myrrh". This is the true worship, because in Matthew to "offer gifts" occurs elsewhere when it is a matter of offerings to God in the temple (5.23(2);8.4; 15.5;23.18,19). In 18.38 "adore" is used of homage to a king. But it is in a parable, and the king is transparently God. Finally, "Out of Egypt have I called my son" gives what will be the central title of Jesus in Matthew. In the present context, "Son" is not stressed, but his status has been made clear: he is the centre of the world's faith and religion, to whom "every knee should bow" (Is 45.23; Phil 2.10).

(d) His people

The fourth element of Matthew's structural arch is that Jesus Christ is depicted along with "his people" (to be saved from their sins, 1.21). And he is the ruler who is to govern God's people, Israel (2.6 - a quotation from Micah). But the Israel who were Rachel's children is "no more" (2.17). Instead, the God-with-us is adored by magi from the East, the advance guard of those who were to come "from the east and from the west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness" (8.11,12). The faith of the nations which appear as the people of Tyre and Sidon is signalled again in the story of the Canaanite woman (15.21-28) and in the cry of the centurion at the foot of the cross (27.54). Matthew does not use any such term as "the true Israel", the "new Israel" or the "Israel of God" (Gal 6.16)

II Chapter 11

The second main statement of Matthew's ruling idea is 11.25-30.

(a) Sufficient signs

These are all the miracles recorded in bulk or in detail from 4.23 to 12.23, which have aroused the people to admiration, e.g., 9.33. But among the signs must also be included Jesus' preaching which was acclaimed by the crowds in the same terms as miracles: "The crowds were astonished at his teaching" (7.28). Then there is the decisive text of 12.38-42. The demand for a sign is answered by Jesus affirming that with his own preaching there was something greater than the prophet's words which moved Nineveh to repentance, greater than the wisdom of Solomon which had drawn the queen from the farthest south.

(b) Unbelief

The crowds rise to applaud, but do not bow down to adore. That the refusal is total is made plain in the comparison of Jesus' hearers to sulky children whom nothing can please, whether dance or dirge (11.16-19). The theme is developed in the denunciation of the cities, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, where Jesus had done "most of his mighty works". The refusal to repent before someone greater than Jonah's preaching or Solomon's wisdom has already been alluded to (b - above). The final dire straits of the unrepentant people are depicted in grim terms in the parable of the devil who returns to his former home along with seven others worse than himself (12.43-45)

(c) Jesus Christ, the Son of God

The most explicit statement of Jesus' unique status is 11.27: "No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son." The Son is on equal footing with the Father in a knowledge which is exclusive and reciprocal. And since the Son's knowledge is exactly parallel to that of the Father, it is total. This saying was once treated as "a meteor from the sky of Johannine theology". Now, however, most commentators recognize that "the divine sonship in the metaphysical sense is the presupposition taken for granted throughout the whole NT" (E. Käsemann, An die Römer, 3rd ed., 1973, p3). Earlier, R. Bultmann had put it this way: the Christ-myth is the basic unifying principle of the synoptic gospels (Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition, 3rd ed., 1957,

397), the myth being that "he who had lived on earth as son of God, had suffered, died and risen, and been exalted to heavenly glory" (ibid.p396). In spite of the obscurity that now surrounds the words "myth" and "metaphysics", this is what the older theology called the "Filius Dei naturalis non adoptivus". In recent commentaries the only discordant note comes from E. Schweizer (Das Evangelium nach Matthäus 1973, p176) where knowledge is said to mean "election": the Son has been "chosen" by the Father. This is excluded, however, by the reciprocity of the knowledge. The Father cannot be the "Elect" of the Son. In monotheism he has no choice among gods. And to reduce the Son's knowledge to "acceptance" (of a mission like an OT prophet) gives the word "know" two different meanings in one sentence, and a strictly symmetrical one at that. The main reason for understanding "to know" in the sense of "to choose" is said to be the OT text, "You alone have I known from all the nations of the earth" (Amos 3.2). But this question was denied by OT scholars as long ago as L. Köhler (Theologie des AT 1936), and again recently by C. Westermann (Theologie des AT in Grundzügen 1978, p34), where the note explains: "The yada ti should not be translated as 'chosen'. 'I have known' is to be understood in the sense of knowledge in encounter", N.5. Other authors have also noticed how wide the term used was, and that "know" was not the precise (Deuteronomic) term "choose", e.g., H.W. Wolff (Amoskommentar 1969, p214). But whatever about the Hebrew, the Greek word "to know" means sometimes to know intimately as in Matthew 1.25 (which may be an echo of the LXX but was common enough in ordinary Greek (Bauer, Lexikon, sub voce 5)). It is a fault of method to translate a Greek word by its supposed Hebrew equivalent - "abandoning the data for an hypothesis" (E. Lohmeyer, Matthäus, ed. W. Schmauch 1956, p356). Readers of a Greek text did not see it as a code needing a Hebrew concordance and lexicon to And, then, v27 is a very "Greek" phrase. Its closest parallels are such Hermetica as "I know you, Hermes,.....as you know me". Such knowledge was not one mystic's sole and exclusive property in Hermetism, as it was in the reciprocal knowledge of Son and Father. In keeping with such high knowledge the Son makes, like the Father, a sovereign choice of those who are to receive his revelat-

ion (vv26,27b). This goes beyond even Johannine theology. There Jesus' "own" (1.11 etc) are "given him" (17.6) by the Father. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (6.44). In Matthew 11.27b the decision as to who are to be his own is made by Jesus the Son.

(d) His people

The presentation of Jesus in his unique and sovereign status is accompanied, as in chapter 2 above (16.16ff; 28.18ff - see below) by a sight of the people who are to be his own. They are "all who labour and are heavy-burdened" (v28). The call should not be restricted to an Israel finding the Law and its Pharisaic interpretation too burdensome. This is still chapter 11. It is not chapter 23 e.g., 23.4. Everyone is addressed as in Sirach 40.1, "Much labour was created for every man, and a heavy yoke is laid upon the sons of Adam, from the day they come forth from the mother's womb till the day they return to the mother of all". The many echoes of the last chapters of Sirach to be found in Matthew 11.26ff have often been noted. There the teacher of wisdom "finds rest" in the divine wisdom, a personified attribute of God. But the teacher has had to pray and labour for wisdom and the rest it gives. Jesus simply promises rest, as the depository of it, to all who come to him. It is not therefore certain that "my yoke" refers, directly at any rate, to Jesus' precepts such as those given in the Sermon on the Mount. And tempting though it would be to compare "my yoke" with "the yoke of the kingdom" (later Jewish tradition), one cannot be sure that the parallel would have been accessible to either Matthew or his readers. The "all" of 11.28 must therefore be left unqualified as "universal".

III Chapter 16

The next clear "Jesus Christ, Son of God, with his people" occurs at 16.16-19. It stands out as the only place in the four gospels (with 18.18) where the word "Church" appears. "Church" stands for "his people" and the magi (Ch.2); the "all" of 11.28 and the "all nations" of 28.19.

a) Sufficient Signs

The context here starts with the chapter of the parables(13.1-51). They are examples of the "wisdom" of Jesus(13.54), at which Nazareth first was astonished, then scandalized(13.53,57). His "wisdom and mighty works" are associated as marvels(13.54). Jesus' preaching had already been said to have been more telling and momentous than Jonah and Solomon combined - prophecy and wisdom perhaps standing here for the more usual "law and prophets" to sum up the OT(7.12;22.40). Then, after the multiplication of food(14.16-21;15.32-38), the miracles for which the crowd glorified the God of Israel(15.31), there is the straightforward affirmation that enough has been done. "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times" (16.3).

b) Unbelief

The crowds have marvelled and even glorified the God of Israel (15.31). The inadequacy of the general response of Pharisee, Sadducee, scribe and people are at one apparently here, like priests and people in ch.2 - is dwelt on in detail (16.13-14). Even if the people glorified the God of Israel for raising the Baptist from the dead - see 14.2 - or for a miracle-worker and prophet like Elijah, or the Jeremiah who preoccupied late Judaism (2 Mac 14.1-8; 15.13-16) or another ancient prophet raised from the dead or returned from heaven, they failed to comprehend the coming of God in Jesus, failed and refused (13.13-15).

c) Jesus Christ

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16.16) is Peter's profession of faith. This could be translated "You are Christ, the Son of the living God" since Jesus Christ and Christ are mostly proper names in Matthew (see above 1c). With or without the article, the name can have the same meaning. The only certain use of "the Christ" as the "Anointed" (Messiah) in Matthew is at 11.20 and 22.42. In 16.16 "Christ" is all the more likely to be a proper name because the profession of faith has been "Christianized"; contrast the parallels, "the Christ" (Mark 8.29), "the Christ of the Lord" (Luke 9.20; one of Luke's many semitisms, based on the LXX); "the holy one of

Cod"(John 6.69). The high priest at Jesus' trial uses the same Christianized expression, "Are you (the) Christ, Son of God"? (27.63). It is not even certain that most Christian readers, even in clearer cases, translated "Christ" by the "Anointed". H. Lohse (TWNT, Vol 9, p421) maintains that the chrestiani of Suetonius and Tacitus is not a case of itacism, but an interpretation of "Christ" as "the mild" (clemens) which was more obvious to the Greeks than a derivation from chriō, anoint. Anyway, - the important thing is that Jesus is called "the Son of the living God" without any emphasis on the "living" since the word is omitted from the formula when it is echoed at the trial. This is the fourth time that "Son of God" has appeared as Jesus' title in Matthew. It was the title given him by the tempter (4.3,6) and demons (8.29) and then by "those in the boat"(14.33). Evidently it had occurred as simply "the Son" (2.15;3.17;11.27). Why then is Peter singularly praised for using it (16.17)? - Clearly, to give the cue for the words in which his singular status as impregnable rock is affirmed.

When then Jesus says, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father", he shows the same intimate knowledge of "all things in heaven" (11.27a) as he affirmed of himself in 11.27b. Speaking as Yahweh, rather than for Yahweh, he gives Simon a theological, programmatic name, Peter, Rock, like Abram being changed to Abraham by Yahweh (Gen 17.5). He goes on, "I will build my church". He "will" build, affirming his presence and power for future ages as in 18.20; 28.20. And it is "my" Church, where the OT had "the Church of the Lord (Yahweh)" or "of God" (Deut 23.1,2 LXX; 2.3 MT; Judges 20.2 and passim). Compare "his (Jesus') people" (1.21), which is nonetheless God's "people Israel" (2.6). Note also "my yoke" (11.28) which at least means his commandments. Jesus, acting as Lord, has the keys of the kingdom of heaven at his disposal (v19) and can guarantee divine ratification for all that is bound or loosed by Peter on earth. The uniqueness of Jesus' sonship is as plain as in 11.27

(d) His people

Here, returning to ancient Christian usage, seen in the Pauline epistles, Matthew uses the term which was to become the official designation of the people of Jesus

Christ, in the creeds. "The Church" takes the place the kingdom of the Messiah. This is what the magi pre-figured, what the "all" of 11.28 comprises, what will be constituted by disciples from "all nations" (28.19). The relation of the Church to the kingdom of heaven need not be discussed here. Matthew does not describe it as the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The nearest he comes to this is 13.41, "The Son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all scandal and evildoers". But even here it is not certain whether the kingdom is the world ("the field is the world" 13.38) or the Church. The term "people of God" is not found in Matthew, and is rare in the NT where it is practically confined to OT quotations and to Hebrews - "a sabbath rest for the people of God". Like Luke, Hebrews goes in for archaisms, deliberately bringing in OT terms. For the third time, then, when the Son of God is solemnly presented, he is accompanied by the equivalent of a kingdom, or, rather, the fulfilment of the promise of a "kingdom for Israel" (1 QM 12.16;17.7) in an unexpected way.

IV Chapter 28

The main text here is 28.18-20. It is prepared for by the same elements as in the three previous statements about Jesus and his people.

(a) Sufficient signs

The mockery under the cross shows that the execution of Jesus had cancelled out, in the eyes of the people, his previous signs (27.39-44). So the decisive sign, the resurrection, had to be in the structure of Matthew, sufficiently made known to the people. The first intimations come at Jesus' death. "The curtain of the temple was torn in two....the earth shook....the rocks were split..." (27.51-52). This is the language of OT theophanies which is taken up again in 28.2,3: "When the centurion and the other sentinels saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God'". By this Matthew signifies that as for the other centurion (8.5-10), sufficiently definite signs were being given, enough to be likewise the occasion of "faith". Full information then comes to the people, as in chapter 2, through their heads and

representatives, the chief priests and Pharisees. These were told by the guards at the tomb of "all that had taken place" (28.12), the earthquake, the empty tomb, the heavenly being with the theophanic attributes of lightning and brightness, and the meaning of it all, "He is risen". The guards had become like deadmen (28.4) but were still able to recount "all". This is like the disciples at Gethsemane, sleeping but able to tell of Jesus' prayer. What Matthew means is certain however weakly the story is told: "the Jews" all heard of Jesus' resurrection (28.15)

(b) Unbelief

The Gospel has been moving towards close with a crescendo of unbelief from the Jews, clamouring for the death of "Jesus who is called Christ" (27.17) and breaking completely with the "King of the Jews" (27.29,37; cf 2.2). This refusal of belief persists after sufficient notification of the resurrection. It persisted "until this day" (28.15). Matthew has dwelt so much in the gospel on Jewish unbelief that he has recently been accused of not writing a "gospel", good news, at all. It should therefore be remarked that Matthew is not more "anti-Jewish" than other NT writers. Even Paul could write of "the Jew who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets....to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last (or, for ever)" (1 Thess 2.15,16; cf Mt 23.32-36) And neither Paul here nor the other NT writers are more "anti-Jewish" than the OT prophets. "The end has come upon my people Israel" (Amos 8.2). "Zion shall be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins and the mount of the temple a wooded height (or, high place, an idolatrous shrine)" (Micah 3.12). These are the last authentic words of these prophets after denunciations as severe as are found in Matthew.

(c) Jesus Christ

All power and authority come to Jesus Christ as in 11.27, from the Father who, despite Jesus' acting and speaking as Yahweh, does not fade into the background to become a dieu fainéant like the Kronos of the Greeks and "high gods" in religions of ancient times and primitive peoples. The risen Lord is not described. The

terrifying elements of theophany have been transferred to the "angel of the Lord" (28.2-3). But the women he meets "worship him", like the magi(2.11). So too the disciples(28.17). They are to baptize all nations "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"(28.19). The "theology of the name" (of Yahweh) has been applied to Jesus throughout. All that is done or suffered in the name of Yahweh in the OT is now performed in the name of Jesus, from baptism to prayer and adoration. Compare "You will be hated for my name's sake"(Matt 10.22) with Isaiah 66.5, "Your brethren hate you for my name's sake." The name of Jesus is the focus of the believer's life (Matt 7.22(three times); 18.5 19.29;24.5;18.20) and "for my sake"(5.10,11) should be included here since the name stands for the person. The "theology of the name" if fully treated by J. Dupont, DBS 1960, col.514-554, especially 532-534.

The name of Jesus is now replaced for baptism by the name "of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." This formula was prepared for, or had left its echo in, the account of Jesus' baptism(3.16,17) "He (Jesus) saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove.....and there was a voice from heaven saying, 'This is my beloved Son'". For the association of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, see as early as 2 Corinthians 13.13. (The debate about whether there was ever a baptismal formula "in the name of Jesus" alone, as in Acts, passim does not concern the exegesis of Matthew). Jesus as the Son is on a level with the Father and Holy Spirit, as with the Father (11.27)

But perhaps the most revealing saying of all is in v20, "Behold, I am with you always, till the end of the age." It is the inclusio of the gospel, taking up and translating in unmistakable terms the Immanuel, God-with-us of 1.23. It is also the conclusion of a theophany, the literary form in which the whole resurrection narrative was couched by Matthew, beginning with the earthquake and darkness (cf. Psalm 18.7-9) of 27.51ff. The last part of chapter 28 is the mission or covenant which often forms the end of a theophany (Exod 20.7-17;19.4-6; Deut 5.6-21; 2 Kings 22.19-23; Isaiah 6.1-10). The elements of the divine utterance are "self-presentation, command, promise". (W.Trilling, Das Wahre Israel 1962, pp30-32). One of

the "purest" forms is given in Exodus 3.6-12, "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham....Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people.... I will be with you." The "I will be with you" of Yahweh occurs some one hundred times in the OT (H. Preuss, ZAW 80, 1968, pp139-173 - full treatment). The same three elements of theophany are manifest (Matt 28.18-20. (On Matthew 28 as theophany, see ITQ 42 (1975) pp259-271 by the present writer).

(d) His people

As prefigured by the magi, Jesus Christ has a people of all nations(28.19), universal in a way that "Messianic" hopes (a minor element in the OT) did not envisage.

The main, specifically Matthaean idea, under which he gathers his Marcan source, the logia and his own tradition and theology is clear. Jesus Christ is Son of God and has had his people. Discussion on how other titles especially Son of Man, stand to this would be rewarding but not relevant here. It seems certain that the Hebrew-derived "Messiah", common in modern exegesis, has in this form very little at all to do with the NT designation of Jesus Christ, from Paul to Matthew as Son of God.

Two foot-notes. 1. The above exposition of Matthew leaves out of consideration whether it is historical or not or how much.

2. It is not suggested that Matthew clearly formulated in his mind the "main idea" as expounded above. It arises from a reading of his words which is all we have. The "mind of the author" is not for us to know apart from what he says.

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Ilfat Sonsino, Motive Clauses in Hebrew Law. Biblical Forms and Near Eastern Parallels

Scholars Press, Chico 1980 ppxix + 336 Np

Motive clauses are "independent clauses or phrases which express the motive behind the legal prescriptions" and should not be confused with explicative notes or parenthetic statements (p224). The work under review takes a close look at the motive clauses both in the OT and in extra-biblical texts. It begins in chapter one with a description of the form and social setting of biblical and cuneiform laws. Comparison between the two types is inconclusive as the original social setting is now blurred. The next chapter deals with the motive clause in biblical law, its definition, form, distribution, content and function. Chapter three considers this type of clause in ancient near Eastern collections such as the Code of Hammurapi, the Laws of Eshnunna and the Lipit-eshhtar Code. The final chapter deals with the vexed question of originality: did these clauses form part of the original law or were they added later? He concludes: "Motive clauses identified in ancient Near Eastern texts, both legal and non-legal, which by their nature are not likely to have undergone editorial reworking clearly indicate that a motive clause cannot be ascribed to later editors just because it is a motive clause" (p226). He also concludes that "motive clauses are 'at home' primarily in wisdom instructions" (p170).

There are four statistics charts, a bibliography and indices and a lengthy appendix which gives the text of both laws and motive clauses in the six Pentateuchal law collections. In chapter 3 Assyrian and Babylonian legal texts are provided in the original language, but unfortunately in transliteration only and not in normalized script. There are some omissions such as Haase's introduction to cuneiform law, McCarthy's second edition of Treaty and Covenant and the study of naditu-women by Harris in the Göppenheim Festschrift (Chicago 1964), but otherwise the bibliography enough. This study is recommended both for its presentation of material and for its balanced conclusions.

Newcastle upon Tyne

Wilfred G.E. Watson

D. Bruce Woll, Johannine Christianity in Conflict,
Scholars Press, Chico, 1981 pp188 Np

Some of the thorny questions posed by the farewell discourses of the Fourth Gospel are faced head-on in this original and penetrating work. It analyses the first farewell discourse (13.31-14.31), giving special attention to the two Paraclete promises (14.16-17.26), to their function in the thought sequence of the discourse and their relation to the concrete situation of the Johannine community. Besides, the author proposes that "authority, power, legitimation, rank, succession and hierarchy" are key themes or "categories" that help us understand the discourse. For example, the promise of the Spirit as another Paraclete raises fundamental questions about our understanding of the authority, power and status of the Johannine Jesus. Jesus tells the disciples that another Paraclete will take his place, will succeed him. How can he be replaced at his departure by someone else? How can the Johannine Jesus have a "double"? The promise of a Paraclete raises questions about the limits of the Son's authority and about his rank: Jesus tells the disciples that the Spirit of Truth will guide them into "all the truth" in contrast to Jesus himself who, because of the limitations of the disciples, cannot reveal everything. This emphasis on the Paraclete as a successor figure to Jesus seems to jeopardize and contradict the massive christocentric stress of the Gospel.

For the author these are the pivotal questions which bring to light the function of the first farewell discourse and the community situation it envisages. In the first part (Chs 1-5) the twofold promise of the Paraclete is examined in terms of its function within the discourse. The central theme of the discourse is not the presence of the Son in the community but rather his pre-eminence, demonstrated in his triumphant return to the Father, alone. His departure is glorification, which means the vindication of his claims to be from above, for he shares the glory with God; he goes before the disciples to prepare a place and the position of the disciples depends on his mediation with the Father (13.31-14.3)

This mediating role of Jesus, grounded in his unique

relationship of direct union with the Father, is exclusive. It is only through him that disciples have access to the divine source of power and authority, represented by the Father (14.4-11). But when Jesus goes away, the believer will take the place of Jesus as agent of the works Jesus has been doing and the Spirit is the power that will enable disciples to do the "works" of Jesus and even "greater works". The disciples are successors to the powers and place of Jesus by virtue of their possession of Jesus himself in the form of the Spirit. He returns to them in the form of the Spirit and helps them to "remember" (14.12-26). Therefore the disciples have a remarkably high position as "successors" of Jesus. However, they are placed in a subordinate position to the Son since through him they have both access to the Father and depend on his Spirit.

While the pre-eminence of the Son is the central theme of the discourse, it is set forth in relation to the disciples. On the one hand they are viewed in terms of their access to heaven (i.e., to communion with the Father and Son who are in glory). On the other hand, they are viewed in terms of their agency on earth. Besides, the note of consolation for disciples is secondary to the motifs of Jesus' pre-eminence and of their subordination to and separation from him (especially in 13.31-14.3).

The second part of the dissertation (Ch.6) relates the discourse to the community situation behind the Gospel. The hypothesis proposed is that the author counteracts a particular group who are appealing to the Spirit for their authority and power. They consider themselves to be rightful followers or successors of Christ in the sense of claiming the same kind of direct access to God, the Father, as he claimed. Against such a view the author not only draws on traditions concerning the Holy Spirit which they followed but also locates the Paraclete promises within a message of mediated authority. Their claims to direct independent access to divine authority through the Spirit have gone out of control by becoming a threat to the primacy of the Son. Christian disciples have power through the Spirit but they are subordinate to the Son. They have access to the Father through him who returns to the community "in the form of the Spirit". In this situation the author highlights the mediating role of Jesus.

The disciple-successor of Jesus must be subordinate to the Jesus of tradition, such as is properly "remembered" in the community (cf 14.26). The Jesus tradition of the community, as interpreted by the author, and which they should "remember" through the Spirit, is at variance with the way this particular group usurp prerogatives of Jesus by claiming direct access to God through their possession of the Spirit.

This analysis and interpretation is presented cogently and meticulously. The varying viewpoints of scholars on this part of the Gospel are evaluated and the author traces his own route through some very difficult and disputed issues which have sometimes been shelved in the past. Following recent trends in Johannine scholarship he explores the community situation behind the Gospel. This is a hazardous enterprise because the evidence within the Gospel is often unclear or ambivalent, particularly in the case of the Paraclete promises. It is difficult to point conclusively to a situation where a particular "charismatic" group claim direct access to God after the manner of Jesus and to interpret the Paraclete promises in the light of this situation.

F. Porsch, who has developed the immediate context and the community background of these promises (Pneuma und Wort, Frankfurt-Main, 1974: an important work which is not mentioned by the author) suggests that the evangelist in drawing upon traditions about the Holy Spirit wishes to underline the special role of the Spirit-Paraclete who strengthens (assists) the community in their commitment to Christ in a situation marked by conflict, opposition to the word of Jesus and by the hostility of their "world", when Jesus is "absent". Whether the motif of Jesus' pre-eminence in relation to the disciples is more dominant or even as dominant as the departure of Jesus, separation for disciples and Jesus' return to be present in the community can be questioned. The progressive and coherent movement of the discourse points to an emphasis on the presence of Jesus in absence.

It is true that the authority of the Holy Spirit stands out in bold relief in a gospel which is remarkably free of explicit mention of Church authority, offices and

structures (except perhaps ch.21). It is likely that a "charismatic" prophetic activity played a role in the development of the Johannine tradition. However it is not clear that the Gospel implies there is a conflict between a "charismatic" group, strongly influenced by traditions concerning the Holy Spirit, and the christology of the Gospel. The pneumatology of the Gospel is first and foremost christological; the function of the Spirit is to awaken, deepen and strengthen the community in their commitment to Christ as regards who he is, what he means to them in life and as regards his relationship to the Father and to humanity. The Spirit-Paraclete is a gift of Jesus, glorified by his cross and resurrection. He is also oriented towards Jesus and his work. There is a continuity between the visible presence of Jesus among his own and the work of the Spirit, the time of the Church. The characteristic work of the Spirit is to keep the link between believers and Jesus and to make Jesus present for all time so that the era of the Spirit-Paraclete is the era of a new presence of Jesus.

However, "the identification between Jesus and the Spirit" so that "Jesus returns to the disciples in the form of the Spirit" (p88) obscures the distinction in the Gospel between the glorified Jesus and the Spirit (cf 7.39;16.7). There is both a distinction and a real parallel between the relation of the glorified Jesus to the Spirit and that of Jesus to the Father (12.45;14.9-10,23-24). The Spirit is not just another appearance "form" of the risen Jesus. The Spirit continues the work of Jesus and renders effective the presence of the glorified Lord in a new way. The "works" which Jesus does through believers in and through the Spirit (14.12) are described as "authority to do miracles..... authority over life and death" and they include the power to forgive and retain sins (pp85-86). However, it must be added that, as regards Jesus, his "works" which embrace his whole revealing and life-giving activity also include his words (14.10). As regards the believer, the various manifestations of faith in Jesus are called "works". They result from the believer's communion with Jesus and the Father (14.12) and they are his response to God revealing himself in Jesus. They are the various effects and manifestations in word and action of the disciple's faith in Jesus (3.21;6.29). The meaning of "works" in relation

to disciples cannot be further specified from the gospel text.

Finally, for those who wish to come to a deeper understanding of the farewell discourses, so central to the whole Gospel, this book will be necessary and very helpful reading. The new perspectives it provides with commendable thoroughness will challenge and surprise many readers.

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David L. Balch, Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter

Scholars Press, Chico, CA 95927 1981 pp ix + 196

In 1 Peter 2.13-3.7 we have a brief set of instructions for Christians, in form resembling Col 3.18-4.1 and Eph 5.22-6.9. Is this form a Christian development or did the Christians derive it from elsewhere? What is its place in 1 Peter? These are the kind of questions which Balch sets out to answer paying particular attention to 3.1-6, the submissiveness of wives to their husbands. Much previous work has suggested an origin in Stoicism. Balch, however, isolates a triad going back to Aristotle in which the reciprocal duties of masters/slaves, husbands/wives and parents/children are set out together with a section on the "economy" of the household. The latter does not appear in the Christian form. This triad in its Aristotelean form was in use in the first century and lay to hand for Christians to pick up and use. Central to it is the superior/inferior polarity.

This household ethic was generally accepted in the higher ranges of society and therefore in the homes of those who occupied ruling positions. The Romans expected minority religious communities to come to terms with it so,

For instance, they objected to women joining the cult of *conysius*. Men naturally ruled in Rome and the governors of 1 Peter 2.14 would be judging Christians in the light of this code relating to husbands and wives.

Various suggestions have been made as to the place of this code of conduct both in Christianity and in 1 Peter: (1) it had a general ethical use without reference to any particular situation; (2) it was used to suppress unrest amongst women and slaves caused by Gal 3.28; (3) it had its place in the mission of the church (wives win their husbands "without a word"). Balch however argues that its purpose was apologetic, not a written apology for Christianity to outsiders to read but instructions to Christians how they should present a picture of themselves to the outside world (cf. 2.11f,15;3.15). Such an apologetic use could lower social tension, for Christians generally were sensitive in the late first century to what others thought of them. The code was therefore not brought into use because of the delay in the parousia and the need for a detailed ethic but rather because of possible outside pressure.

The polarity that we find in the Aristotelian form and Colossians and Ephesians is missing in 1 Peter apart from one verse referring to husbands in 3.7. Balch argues that the author of 1 Peter had modified the form so that only those areas where tension might exist were covered by it. Even if we suppose that this is true there is the difficulty of 2. 13-17, instruction on behaviour towards the state, which has no place in the Aristotelian triad or in Colossians and Ephesians. The section on the household economy in Aristotle is also dropped. It is doubtful if the letter is basically apologetic in the way in which Balch supposed.

Despite these criticisms Balch has made a valuable contribution, perhaps more to the Haustafel form as we find it in Colossians and Ephesians than in 1 Peter, providing a wealth of illustration from contemporary literature. We can also see from his study how the details of Christian ethic were drawn from contemporary society in order to preserve the proper relation to that society rather than directly from basic Christian ethical principles. Although the letter certainly

does not say "Aristotle says", neither does it say "God says" and make this the basis for its instruction. The details of the Christian ethic in 1 Peter arise then not out of Christianity in and of itself, but from its need to face society. This has particular relevance to the contemporary discussion about the place of women in the church and in society

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Stanley Kent Stowers, The Diatribe and Paul's Letter to the Romans,
Scholars' Press, Chico, California 95927 1981 pp xvii
+ 261

Bultmann first made himself known to the NT world by his dissertation comparing the style of Paul's preaching and the cynic-stoic diatribe. To a large extent his work has been accepted. At least two factors have made a re-consideration necessary: (1) a deeper understanding of the nature of the ancient diatribe; (2) recent discussion on the purpose of Romans. With these two factors in mind Stowers re-examines the diatribe and the letter to the Romans.

He disagrees with Bultmann on his emphasis on the use by wandering cynic preachers of the diatribe. Its situation was the philosophical school where it was used with the intention of leading students to the realisation of their errors and to a deeper commitment to the philosophical life. It could be and was also imitated in literary work. After discussing the various minor forms which appear in the diatribe Gattung Stowers shows that Paul used these, though not always with the same frequency as in the diatribe. He used the diatribe intentionally "adapting it to the communication of Christian beliefs and traditions.....within the framework and ethos of the Greek letter forms" (p178). In contra-distinction from Bultmann Stowers argues that it was not his "preaching

style unconsciously slipping through" (p179). Its use is appropriate to the role of teacher in which Paul presented himself to the Romans and its dialogical element reflects "Paul's understanding of their (The Romans) pedagogical needs" (p181). It is not used however to discuss their particular problems in any direct way. It is preparation for his visit to Rome and he preaches the gospel in the letter as he hopes to preach it later verbally in Rome. The main part of the argument of the letter "is written in the style he would use in teaching a group of Christians" (p182) in order to strengthen the Roman community. It is then a form used for the instruction of those who are already Christians rather than one for evangelism in the marketplace.

This is a competent piece of work if not exactly enthralling. Like Bultmann's book it was originally a dissertation and though clearly written with adequate summaries it still retains the style of a dissertation. There are many lengthy quotations from ancient writers and the footnotes which are important are extensive.

It raises wider questions which it makes no attempt to answer. (1) If the place of the diatribe is in the teaching of the philosophical school, does Paul's use of it imply that he attended such a school? Was its use known in Jewish schools? If Paul did not attend such a school did he, as every preacher and writer does, pick up tricks of style and methods of arguing from other preachers and writers? How widely was the method known and used outside the schools? (2) Is there any evidence for the use of such methods of arguing in communities isolated from the philosophical schools of the Greco-Roman world? If there is, then the method might be one which would arise spontaneously given a certain situation, a writer and the need to argue a case. Stowers only shows parallels between Paul and the diatribe as used by certain ancient writers; he does not show Paul could not have been influenced from elsewhere. Until this negative side has been demonstrated it is hazardous to draw conclusions about Paul's attitude to the Roman Christian community when he wrote to it

Maurice C. Burrell, The Challenge of the Cults,

IVPress 1981 pp160 £1.60

Canon Maurice Burrell of Norwich, co-editor with Stafford Wright of an earlier book on the long established sects like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, has now written a very useful and succinct paperback volume on those more recent cults which have today captured the allegiance of many young people and by their exclusiveness have caused distress to many families. This book provides accurate information about the teaching of these sects and sets out clearly how they differ from the basic teachings of Christianity.

The seven cults examined fall into three groups. There are those which are Christian deviations, i.e., Herbert Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God and Berg's Family of Love and Moon's Unification Church. There are cults that are essentially Indian in origin, i.e., Maharag Ti's Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna and Transcendental Meditation. The last of these could also be slotted into the third category of "scientific philosophy" as Transcendental Meditation tends to claim to be not a religion but a technique for spiritual peace and fulfilment, as does the final sect here examined, Ron Hubbard's Scientology.

We should all be grateful for a little book which will help everybody who is called in as a counsellor for a distressed family or is involved in discussion with a convert to any of these sects or comes into contact with their often very authoritarian leaders. Canon Burrell writes from a conservative evangelical but not fundamentalist point of view, so that while his statement of the Christian faith is traditional, it is basically central in its emphasis. He seeks to be wholly fair to the real, if mistaken, sincerity and burning zeal of many of the members of these sects. He also reminds orthodox Christians of their own failures in commitment and friendship which have often led the young, including well-educated students, to find in these sects a reality they had failed to meet in the great churches.

All these sects give a less central place to Jesus

Christ as the source of full salvation. Almost all cults stress good works as the means of salvation, though these works may take the form of ascetic rejection of the material good things of life. So the Worldwide Church of God sees salvation as coming through a literal keeping of the ten commandments and certain OT rites. The Unification Church and Hare Krishna are strongly ascetic in relation to sex, in the latter the local leader exercising complete authority over the right of members to marry. At the other extreme the Family of Love verges on antinomianism.

Several of the sects teach the divinisation of mankind. After death man is "born again" to a new form of existence which is divine (Worldwide Church of God). Moon believes in the establishment on earth of a perfect family of God which Jesus had not been able to create because of his crucifixion. This, however, will be attained at a second advent of a lord, who at times seems to be Jesus but who in the eyes of many of his followers is Moon himself. Some of the cults offer a new or fuller revelation, e.g., Berg's Mo-letters specifically making explicit God's will for our time.

All these cults tend to be exclusivist and hostile to the mainline churches and both the Unification church and the Family of God, according to Canon Burrell, practise deliberate deception to win converts. The sects of Indian origin appeal to the "spiritual" in contrast to this material world and so often attract young people brought up in Western affluence.

The last of the seven sects, Scientology, claims to be, not a religion but a scientific account of the human mind, an understanding which frees one from inhibitions and enable one to develop his hidden potential. Most psychologists look on Hubbard's teaching as a hotch-potch of modern theories in psychology.

Many of these views have ancient parallels rejected by the Church's greater teachers. Their appeal comes from two sources: less profound requirements on men and women in face of the sins and weaknesses of human nature, and the failures of the churches to present the gospel in its fulness with its uncompromising claims to put

oneself wholly under the lordship of Christ.

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Stephen B. Clark, Man and Woman in Christ,

Ann Arbor 1980 ppxiii + 753 \$15.95

In a recent publication it is argued that nothing changes your mind so effectively as engaging in dialogue. Your own position has another outlook set over against it, and as you defend your opinion, you almost certainly modify it as the other position forces you to make concessions. The virtue of this large book on the proper relation between the sexes is that it will engage its readers in dialogue.

Over against the general popular view today on the equality of the sexes and the equal right of leadership of women, Mr Clark argues that there is a specific Christian ordering of society which differs markedly from this modern trend. He believes that it is normal and in accordance with the divine purpose that men should be governors in a Christian society while women are called, not to be subservient in any cringing way, but to play important roles under male leadership, both in the home and in the church.

He distinguishes between three types of society: (1) Traditional society in which men often ruled in a domineering fashion and showed quite inadequate consideration for the rights and gifts of women. (2) There is the modern technological society in which the sexes are treated as equal but in which women are unable to play their proper role as the centre of the household. This society is impersonal in many relationships and considers the function which a person plays in society as primary. (3) There is the relational society which reflects the outlook of scripture. Here the extended, rather than the nuclear family, is central and itself the basis of larger community groupings. Here men with the appropriate gifts take the ruling place. Here senior men instruct the younger men in manliness and senior women the younger

women in feminine caring, while together men and women form a rich society. In presenting this picture Mr. Clark sees the church as itself the model. It is not primarily a great institution but rather a group of local societies, as he believes the NT Church to have been. This the modern churches should move towards becoming.

In presenting this thesis Mr Clark has to meet types of objection and readers will differ on how far they believe he succeeds in meeting these criticisms. (1) He has to persuade us that the biblical view of the relation of men and women is as unified as he claims and does not at various periods reflect varying cultures and rather than giving us one unchanging pattern points to the application of a christlike spirit to the new circumstances of our time. (2) He acknowledges the fact that Christians today have to live in and adjust themselves to a technological society, but is it fair to treat liberalism, socialism and marxism as equal aberrations from a Christian ideal, and does he adequately provide a place for those women who, in history, as Queens or Prime Ministers have shown an outstanding gift of leadership? (3) How far does Mr. Clark appear to select from the writing of modern sociologists those who support his theory and fail to quote and argue with those who believe that in our day women with gifts may play ruling roles in society, including ministry in the Church?

Whether the reader is convinced by the author or not, he will recognize that he writes without exaggeration, and without a censorious attitude towards others, and he bids us all ask how far we are satisfied with the tendencies in our society and in the place women are expected to take within it, a place undoubtedly at times detrimental to their special gifts.

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